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NASHVILLE – Twenty-two people have been indicted by the Davidson County Grand Jury on Food Stamp and Families First fraud charges. The suspects received a total of more than \$128,000 in benefits to which they were not entitled, according to the Tennessee Department of Human Services (DHS).

Thirteen of the people indicted received more than \$5,000 each in benefits, with some cases involving more than \$10,000. The suspects were not entitled to benefits, because they intentionally withheld information about their household income or the number of people living in their homes.

In addition, twenty-eight people are being arrested for violating their probation from previous convictions of Families First and Food Stamp fraud. These people owe \$160,000, which they have never repaid, and must now go to jail to serve sentences of up to two years each.

DHS officials thanked the Davidson County District Attorney's Office and the Metropolitan Nashville Police Department for their help in making the indictments and arrests possible.

"We are committed to finding and getting rid of fraud in our Families First and Food Stamp programs," said Connie Collier, DHS District Director of Investigations for Middle Tennessee. "We hope these indictments send a clear message: We're going to find people who are ripping off the taxpayers."

Food Stamp and Families First fraud are Class E felonies. Those found guilty must repay the benefits, and face possible prison sentences, fines and disqualification from either program.

Statewide, more than \$9 million (m) dollars in overpaid benefits were recovered last year. More cases have been referred to the District Attorney's office, and additional indictments are expected in the coming months.